

misleading in field conditions. For example, the Red-vented Bulbul has a small crest and also a white band across the top of the tail, but neither of these field marks is shown in the painting in plate 7, although both are mentioned in the text. On Niue, I again found that the plates did not give the help one would expect in a publication of this type. However, the general text solved most problems, including the most difficult one of identifying a bird by its sound.

The range maps for each species I found useful, and I found the inclusion of local names for each of the island groups to be a major asset when discussing birds with residents. Twice I had local people confirm my tentative identifications by means of the local names. Another helpful feature, which should be used more often in bird books, is the provision of small sketches of a bird, its young, its nest or food, or comparative heads of the shrikebills and broadbills of the region.

In the sections on waders and seabirds, a silhouette is provided for most species, a helpful feature for readers not familiar with these groups. The bibliography of six pages contains 245 references, and the three indexes are for scientific, English and local names.

In conclusion, I strongly recommend this book, but it must be used with care in the field. As the author states in the introduction, much is yet to be learnt about many of the species of the region. The book should be a stimulus to ornithological work in the South Pacific.

L. B. McPherson

*The bird fauna of Niue Island, South-west Pacific, with special notes on the White-tailed Tropic Bird and Golden Plover*, by F. C. Kinsky and J. C. Yaldwyn. 1981. National Museum of New Zealand Miscellaneous Series No. 2; 49 pp., 22 tables of measurements. \$2.80.

This learned systematic treatise provides an adequate picture of the interesting avifauna of remote Niue Island.

After a brief account of Niue's topography and environment and a concise account of previous ornithological work, the 25 species of Niue birds are discussed meticulously in turn. The 25 species include 6 seabirds, 12 land and freshwater birds and 7 transequatorial migrants, increasing by 6 species my own comprehensive list of 1971 (*Notornis* 18: 291-304); however, Child (1982, *Notornis* 29: 99-100) has added three more and another three were seen but not confirmed. This shows how much calendar time is necessary for an island's avifauna to be completely recorded.

The taxonomic treatment of all species is, as expected of the authors, superior, and the two illustrations by Janet Marshall (not mentioned in the text) are of her usual high class.

The map of Niue is not adequate, and one wonders why the authors did not use the Department of Lands and Survey's aerial mosaic, which would have given much more topographical detail. The ecologically important Huvalu Tapu Forest is wrongly spelt and not adequately marked on the map. There is little reference to the relative abundance of various birds as indicated by road counts. More important, there is scant mention of the vegetation (see Sykes, W. R., 1970. *Contributions to the flora of Niue*, DSIR Bull. 200) and even less of

non-avian vertebrates such as the roof rat (*Rattus rattus*), Polynesian rat (*R. exulans*) and feral cats. The fact that Niue is perhaps the only South Pacific island without introduced birds is not mentioned. The conservation legislation passed in the 1970s is mentioned but not that it has since been revoked. Finally, one wonders why, with so many specimens available, no simple statistics have been applied to support the authors' findings.

However, despite these shortcomings, *The bird fauna of Niue* is a masterly approach to the systematics of the island's birds, including as it does an almost complete bibliography and using ample study skins. The description of the plumages and moult of the Golden Plover are of great value and interest. We have to regret that one of the authors has left South Pacific shores and so will not be available to handle more of our problems.

Kazimierz Wodzicki

*Birds of prey of the world*, by Friedhelm Weick, 1980. Collins. pp. 159, 1144 paintings, 160 line drawings. NZ\$50.00.

This book is based on the author's practical experience as a bird painter over 25 years and has been produced with the help of the late Dr Leslie H. Brown, an acknowledged world authority on raptors. Essentially the book is intended as an identification guide to the world's raptors, inspired by Sir Peter Scott's 'Coloured Key to the Waterfowl of the World' and should not be seen as a competitor to other more comprehensive volumes. To this end the book is composed of brief sections, for example, on the topography of a diurnal bird of prey, which serve to introduce and explain the use of the identification key. To supplement this key each species in the Order Falconiformes is illustrated and briefly described according to its plumage and distribution, together with measurements essential to quick and easy identification in the field. An additional aid to rapid diagnosis is the use of small arrows on the colour plates which draw attention to significant differences in appearance and plumage, be they racial, colour phase or otherwise. The text is in English and German.

My response to this book, even as a raptor enthusiast, is lukewarm. Much of its bulk is taken up by the German language sections, which tend to confuse the reader, are of doubtful appeal to New Zealand ornithologists, and when left out, leave little that has not already been written elsewhere. Perhaps two editions, one in English and the other in German, would have been more suitable, and at half the price!

I am most familiar with New Zealand raptors and so have judged the book's accuracy on these species and, alas, the author is not up to date with his information. The author may perhaps be forgiven for not including research done since 1977, but much of the data left out, for example, on the Harrier's length, weight and culmen, has been available for many years. However, the author has been meticulous in the preparation of his colour plates, and, apart from the dorsal surface of the adult male Harrier's tail, which is much more heavily barred, the standard of accuracy is high. Despite this, my recommendation is not to buy the book. Review copy deposited in OSNZ library.

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